

MEMORANDUM

To: Members and Staff, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and Subcommittee on Health
From: Committee on Energy and Commerce Majority Staff
Re: Joint Field Hearing entitled “The Biden Administration's Border Crisis is a Public Health Crisis.”

The Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations and Subcommittee on Health will hold a joint field hearing on Wednesday, February 15, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. (CST) at 301 W Railroad Street, Building D, Weslaco, TX 78596. The hearing is entitled “President Biden’s Border Crisis is a Public Health Crisis.”

I. Witnesses

- Mr. Urbino Martinez, Brooks County Sheriff
- Mr. Stuart Archer, CEO, Oceans Health Care
- Ms. Rochelle M. Garza, President, Texas Civil Rights Project
- Mr. Brandon Judd, President, National Border Patrol Council

II. Background

The illegal immigration crisis at the southern border is overwhelming law enforcement officials, and border communities are strained for resources to handle the number of migrants entering the country. The number of encounters at the southwest border exceeded 2.38 million for fiscal year 2022, this is compared to the 458,088 encounters recorded in fiscal year 2020.¹

This crisis not only impacts border communities—it affects every town in America due to the level of illicit fentanyl being trafficked into the country through the southern border. In 2022, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) seized enough fentanyl to kill every American.² Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is up to 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine, and most recent cases of fentanyl-related overdoses are linked to illicitly manufactured fentanyl and fentanyl related substances (FRS).³ Most of these substances are produced in Mexico, from precursor chemicals

¹ U.S. Customs and Border Protection. (17 January 2023). *Southwest Land Border Encounters*. <https://www.cbp.gov/newsroom/stats/southwest-land-border-encounters>

² U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. (20 December 2022). *Drug Enforcement Administration Announces the Seizure of Over 379 million Deadly Doses of Fentanyl in 2022*. <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2022/12/20/drug-enforcement-administration-announces-seizure-over-379-million-deadly>

³ Wilson N, Kariisa M, Seth P, Smith H IV, Davis NL. Drug and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths — United States, 2017–2018. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2020;69:290–297. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6911a4>

largely sourced from China, and trafficked into the United States by the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation (CJNG) cartels.⁴

III. Discussion

This field hearing will discuss the policies that led to the crisis at the southern border and help inform any future actions needed to secure the border, reduce the amount of illicit fentanyl flowing into the United States, and address the public health impacts of the border crisis.

IV. Staff Contacts

If you have questions regarding this hearing, please contact Christen Harsha or Kristin Flukey of the committee staff at 202-225-3641.

⁴ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. (20 December 2022). *Drug Enforcement Administration Announces the Seizure of Over 379 million Deadly Doses of Fentanyl in 2022*. <https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2022/12/20/drug-enforcement-administration-announces-seizure-over-379-million-deadly>